

DR. ANNA JULIA COOPER WAS AN EDUCATIONAL LEADER, FEMINIST, AND ADVOCATE FOR THE RIGHTS OF MINORITIES AND WOMEN. SHE EDUCATED ALL AMERICANS ABOUT SEXISM AND RACISM THROUGH HER WRITING, SPEECHES, AND DECADES OF COMMUNITY SERVICE.

THE *Thumping* WITHIN

The world probably first heard Anna's voice in 1858, but because records of children born into slavery were not well kept, we can't be exactly sure. We do know that she was born in Raleigh, North Carolina. Anna was the daughter of Hannah Stanley, a slave of the Haywood family. She had two older brothers, Andrew and Rufus. Although she was born before President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, Anna had no memories of her life as a slave. Hannah Stanley taught Anna the importance of using her "voice" to support her family and the black community.

In 1867, the Episcopal Church and Freedman's Bureau built St. Augustine's Normal School and Collegiate Institute on land owned by the Haywood family. St. Augustine's educated freed slaves and their families. In 1868, Anna received a scholarship to become one of the school's first students. There she developed a love for learning that would stay with her the rest of her life. When she was very young, Anna decided that she wanted to be a teacher who encouraged all children

to learn. She earned part of her tuition by tutoring her classmates.

St. Augustine's focused on preparing its male students for the ministry or higher education. Because the administrators believed that women went to school to find a husband, female students could only take a series of basic classes known as the Ladies' Course. This frustrated Anna, who longed for more challenging studies. "I constantly felt . . . a thumping from within unanswered by any beckoning from without," she later said. She decided to raise her "voice" to fight for the right to take the same classes as the men.

While at St. Augustine's, Anna took a Greek class taught by George A.C. Cooper, a former slave who was studying to become a minister. The two fell in love and were married on June 21, 1877, after Anna finished her studies at St. Augustine's. On September 27, 1879, just two months after becoming the second black ordained minister in North Carolina's Protestant Episcopal Church, George suddenly died. Anna said he died from working too hard. She never remarried.



LEFT: Anna Julia Cooper prepares to teach class at the M Street High School. ABOVE LEFT: St. Augustine's

Normal School, where Anna studied and fought for the rights of female students. She later returned to St. Augustine's as a teacher. ABOVE RIGHT: Anna, seated at left, with members of the Grimké family and fellow teacher Ella D. Barrier.



SKETCHES FROM A *Teacher's Notebook*

In 1881, Mrs. Cooper started attending Ohio's Oberlin College, one of the first co-educational institutions to admit both women and African Americans. She wrote letters to the school's president for free tuition and a job so she could afford room and board. Among her classmates were Mary Eliza Church (Terrell) and Ida A. Gibbs (Hunt), future black leaders. All three women took classes in Latin, Greek, modern European languages, literature, philosophy, science, and mathematics.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in mathematics in 1884, Mrs. Cooper taught Greek, French literature, and science at Wilberforce University, a historically black school in Xenia, Ohio. Because she wanted to live closer to her mother, she returned to teach at St. Augustine's in 1885. Two years later, Oberlin awarded her an honorary master's degree.

In 1887, Mrs. Cooper was recruited to teach math and science at the Preparatory High School for Colored Youth in Washington, D.C., the nation's largest high school for African Americans. This school was later known as M Street and today as Paul Laurence Dunbar High School. On January 1, 1902, Mrs. Cooper became the principal of M Street High School. She set high academic standards, hired capable teachers, and offered tutoring. She helped students believe that, regardless of their race or gender, they could achieve their dreams. While Mrs. Cooper was principal, many students at M Street earned scholarships to study at important institutions such as Harvard, Brown, Oberlin, Yale, Amherst, Dartmouth, and Radcliffe.

During this period, many Americans believed that blacks weren't as smart as whites. Mrs. Cooper, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Booker T. Washington believed differently. Mr. Washington thought black students should take vocational education courses and work their way up through society starting as manual laborers. Mr.

Du Bois believed that blacks should study the classics and become community leaders. Because Mrs. Cooper agreed with both men, she offered courses in the liberal arts plus vocational and industrial education. Because the D.C. Board of Education preferred Mr. Washington's methods, it did not renew Mrs. Cooper's contract. She stopped being a principal in June 1906. Then she taught languages at the Lincoln Institute in Jefferson City, Missouri, until 1910, when she was rehired to teach Latin at M Street High School.

In 1914, Mrs. Cooper started working on her doctorate at Columbia University in New York City. On December 25, 1915, she became the guardian of five orphaned great-nieces and nephews ranging in age from 6 months to 12 years. Because of her teaching and family responsibilities, she was unable to go to Columbia full time to finish her degree, so she enrolled at the University of Paris, Sorbonne. On March 23, 1925, Mrs. Cooper earned her Ph.D. She was the fourth African-American woman to hold a doctorate. On December 29, 1925, D.C. Commissioner William Tindall awarded her degree in a special ceremony at Howard University.

On June 15, 1930, Dr. Cooper retired from M Street High School. She became president of Frelinghuysen University, which provided social services, vocational training, and educational programs for black, working-class adults in Washington, D.C. She also established the Hannah Stanley Haywood Opportunity School in honor of her mother. When Frelinghuysen lost its building in 1931, Dr. Cooper let the school use her home at 201 T Street. She didn't charge rent or accept a salary. In 1940, Dr. Cooper resigned as president but continued to work as the school's registrar. She made arrangements for her home to be used to promote black education after her death.



LEFT: Tappan Square at Oberlin College, ca. 1880s. RIGHT: Paul Laurence Dunbar High School (also known as M Street) in Washington, D.C., ca. 1917, where Anna taught until 1930.



A *Voice* FROM THE SOUTH

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, white women across the nation struggled to achieve equal rights with men. However, very few invited minority women to join the cause. As a result, African-American women like Dr. Cooper formed their own clubs and began to raise their voices on behalf of women's rights and other issues important to the black community.

In 1892, Dr. Cooper published her most famous work, *A Voice from the South by a Black Woman of the South*. Today, many scholars consider this collection of essays and speeches to be the first book of black feminist thought in America. In it she expressed her belief that educating black women would improve the entire black community. She also encouraged African Americans to promote their own folklore, literature, and art. In addition, Dr. Cooper wrote newspaper articles that urged the training of black teachers and even a flyer urging blacks to fight against Hitler in World War II. She finished a memoir of her life, *The Third Step*, in 1945.

Dr. Cooper was a respected public speaker who often gave speeches on behalf of African-American women and the black community. At the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, she was one of six African-American women to speak at the Congress of Representative Women. She was also one of only two African-American women to speak at the Pan-African Congress in London (1900).

Dr. Cooper organized and participated in many activities that addressed social issues in the black community. She played a leadership role in the Colored Settlement

House in D.C. She was a charter member of the Colored Women's League in D.C. (1892), helped organize the first meeting of the National Conference of Colored Women (1895), and started the first chapter of the Camp Fire Girls (1912). Dr. Cooper co-founded the Colored Women's Christian Association (1905), the first and only Black YWCA in D.C. She became a lifetime member of the YWCA and served on its board of directors.

Dr. Cooper lived to be 105 years old. She lived a rich life as a human rights advocate, lecturer, principal, professor, scholar, teacher, university president, writer, and black feminist. Anna's voice was silenced on February 27, 1964, when she died from a heart attack at her home in Washington, D.C. Her funeral was held at the St. Augustine's College chapel. She was buried next to her husband in the Raleigh city cemetery on March 4, 1964. A traffic circle near her home was named in her honor, the Anna J. Cooper Memorial Circle. Her voice lives on through her writings, however. Dr. Cooper's papers are stored at Howard University's Moorland-Spingarn Research Center. Every new U.S. passport features her voice: "The cause of freedom is not the cause of a race or a sect, a party or a class — it is the cause of humankind, the very birthright of humanity." Dr. Anna Julia Cooper, a voice from the South, a voice for all Americans.



LEFT: Anna (in gown and cape, 3rd from left) leads the 1935 Frelinghuysen University commencement ceremony on the porch of her home. RIGHT: Anna on the porch of her Washington, D.C., home, 1930s. BELOW RIGHT: Some of Anna's publications and her framed diploma from Oberlin College.



DR. ANNA JULIA COOPER
Voice of an
EXTRAORDINARY
EDUCATOR



VISIONARY *Voices*

Materials Needed: paper and pencils, tape, reference books, chart paper, Internet access, shoeboxes, miscellaneous art supplies, cardstock, copy machine, paper cutter

Before You Begin: Read "I Lost My Voice," Gregory K. Pincus (<http://gottabook.blogspot.com/2007/04/i-lost-my-voice-voice-poema-baby.html>). Have students ever felt they've "lost" their voices or that what they said didn't matter to anyone else? To celebrate Black Heritage Month, we're going to learn about a very famous educator and feminist, Dr. Anna Julia Cooper (show USPS poster). She wrote a book called *A Voice from the South* because she had a passion for ensuring that every person's voice was heard and that nobody was invisible in our society.

ACTIVITY ONE: Voices from the Past and Present

1 After reading Anna Julia Cooper's biography, each student chooses one of her life events. Create illustrations and captions highlighting that event. Arrange the papers in chronological order to create an illustrated timeline of Dr. Cooper's life. During her 105 years, Anna Julia Cooper experienced Reconstruction of the South after the Civil War, the Industrial Revolution, two world wars, the woman's suffrage movement, and the beginning of the Civil Rights Era. Have students identify these and other relevant historic events. Create colorful mini-arrows labeling each historic event. Post these at appropriate junctures along Dr. Cooper's timeline.

2 Dr. Cooper was a renowned African-American feminist and educator who fought for the right of minority women and children to pursue their dreams. Who were some other fearless females? Generate a list of research questions such as: When was she born? What was her childhood like? Did

she have a family? What were some obstacles she encountered? Why is she being honored during Black Heritage Month this year? Students conduct research about these feminists and educators: Susan B. Anthony, Catherine Beecher, Mary McLeod Bethune, Marva Collins, Elaine Goodale Eastman, Geraldine Ferraro, Charlotte Forten, Florence Nightingale, Sandra Day O'Connor, Mary Jane Patterson, Nancy Pelosi, Sally Ride, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Gloria Steinem, Julia Richman, Laura Towne, Mary Church Terrell, Barbara Walters, Oprah Winfrey, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, E.V. Wilkins, a local female leader, or a woman of their choice.

3 These fearless females broke boundaries by going "outside the box." To document what they've learned, students place several objects representing the woman's life in a shoebox OR create dioramas replicating a pivotal event. They cover the outside faces of the box with their subject's picture and name, a poem about the person, and four facts about the fearless female's life. Display and share these projects with the entire class.

ACTIVITY TWO: Focusing upon

Fearless Females

Create a deck with four cards featuring each fearless female, including Dr. Cooper. Each card should have the fearless female's name, picture, and one fact. There will be four different facts altogether (one per card). Make multiple sets. Students play "Go Fish" or rummy using the fearless female cards.

LEFT: American schools were segregated by race during Anna Julia Cooper's lifetime, and African-American schools typically lacked the resources of white schools in the same state.



SENSATIONAL *Schools*

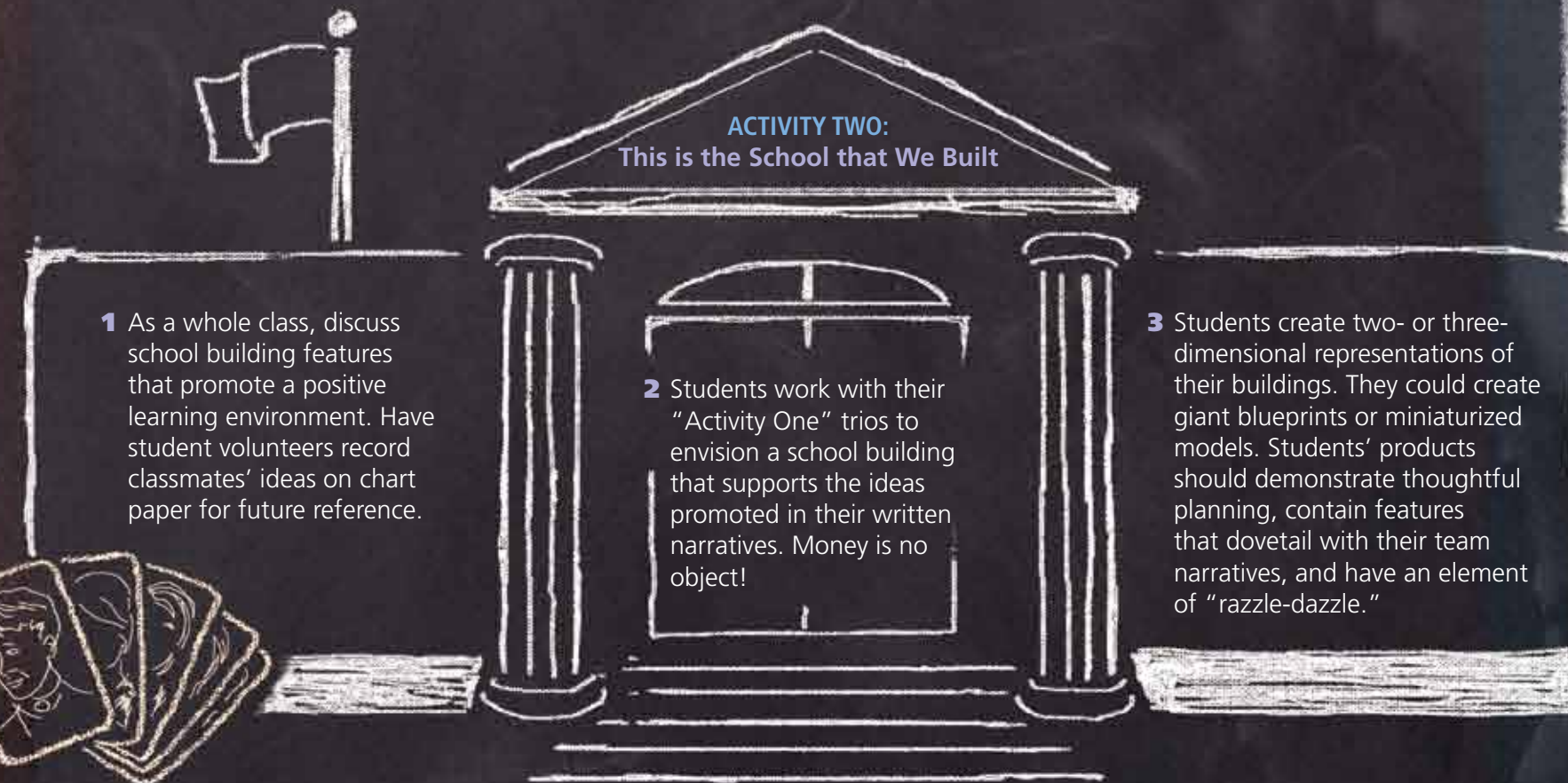
Materials Needed: computer with Internet access and speakers, *If I Ran the Zoo* by Dr. Seuss, miscellaneous art supplies, graph paper, paper and pencils

Before You Begin: Anna Julia Cooper believed in creating schools without boundaries — ones that encouraged children to dare to dream. Whitney Houston's song, "The Greatest Love of All," correlates with Dr. Cooper's philosophy. Share a video, recording, or lyrics from the song (<http://www.whitney-fan.com/music/lyrics/wh85/01.shtml>). Invite students to adjust the pronouns so the song can be sung by them, not about them. Enjoy singing the song!

ACTIVITY ONE: If We Ran the School

1 Read Dr. Seuss's *If I Ran the Zoo*. What changes would students make if they ran the school? What subjects should be taught? What rules would they make? How could the school setting empower all children to dare to dream?

2 Divide students into trios. Student teams write narratives describing how they would run positive, productive schools that would focus upon preparing children for fabulous futures. Narratives should include catchy titles, attention-grabber openings, at least three paragraphs, and sufficient supportive details.



CLOSING ACTIVITY: Come Visit Our School!

Pretend the dreams have become realities and the schools have been built! Student teams take turns hosting an "open house" for their schools. They share their narratives and school buildings. During their presentations, students should use clear, loud voices and appropriate eye contact. All team members should participate. Audience members are expected to listen actively and to provide thoughtful comments and specific praise.

BROKEN *Boundaries*

Materials Needed: mini-library of boundary-breaking children's literature (see below), paper and pencil, chart paper, computer with Internet access, miscellaneous art supplies

Before You Begin: What do these famous people and fictional characters have in common: Marian Anderson, Hattie McDaniel, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Palin, Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, Remy (*Ratatouille*), and Mumble (*Happy Feet*)? They broke through social stereotypes and boundaries to reach their potential. Sometimes our society has preconceived ideas of what people should or should not be able to do because of their gender, race, age, or social circumstances. Brave people break through those boundaries to achieve their dreams. Anna Julia Cooper was such a person.

ACTIVITY ONE: Overcoming Obstacles

1 Read *Amazing Grace*, by Mary Hoffman. Grace overcomes gender and racial boundaries to play the part of Peter Pan in a school play. Discuss: What was Grace's goal? What roadblocks did she have to overcome? Who helped her achieve her goal?

2 What are some boundaries students have experienced when they've tried something new? Write personal narratives describing their boundary-breaking experiences. Students might opt to write about a boundary they hope to break in the future instead. Narratives should have attention-grabbing openings, contain at least three paragraphs, and address these prompts: What were their goals? What boundaries did they have to overcome? Did anyone help them? Share with the class.

ACTIVITY TWO: Beyond Boundaries

1 Explore quality children's literature whose main characters break social boundaries. Titles might include: *Boundless Grace*, by Mary Hoffman; *The Butterfly*, by Patricia Polacco; *Pink and Say*, by Patricia Polacco; *Raisel's Riddle*, by Erica Silverman; *The Paper Bag Princess*, by Robert Munsch; *The Princess Knight*, by Cornelia Funke; *Sleeping Ugly*, by Jane Yolen; *The Maid of the North: Feminist Folk Tales from around the World*, by Ethel Johnston Phelps; *I Wouldn't Thank You for a Valentine: Poems for Young Feminists*, by Carol Ann Duffy; *Cinder Edna*, by Ellen Jackson; and *The Rough-Face Girl*, by Rafe Martin. Additional books promoting nontraditional roles for boys and girls are listed at: <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~mjoeph/chilLit/nontrad.htm#nomtrad> and <http://www.acpl.lib.in.us/children/gender.html>. After reading the books, conduct grand conversations using these prompts: What was the main character's goal? How did the character break through social boundaries? Did anyone help the character reach the goal?

2 Student teams select their favorite boundary-breaking tales. Write scripts which include a list of characters, acting directives, narration, and speaking parts. Perform the scripts as readers theatre, puppet shows, or live dramatizations.



RIGHT: African-American colleges faced many of the same resource challenges as African-American primary schools. This photo of a Frelinghuysen University classroom shows students using a small room of the private home that served as a school building.

"The cause of freedom is not the cause of a race or a sect, a party or a class—it is the cause of humankind, the very birthright of humanity."

Anna Julia Cooper



ANNA JULIA COOPER COMMEMORATIVE STAMP

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